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The Clipper Visits...

Monsignor William Glynn

BY JANE LANE



Monsignor William Glynn, pastor of Holy Family Church, will observe the 50th anniversary of his ordination on April 27th.

He reflects on his vocation of 50 years in simple terms. The priesthood, Monsignor William Glynn says with his traditional humility, is simply a journey he has taken in this lifetime. We are all "on a human journey," he believes. "This is the path I took."

The son of Irish immigrants, he recalls that a generation ago it was "almost expected" that at least 1 son would enter the priesthood. His family produced 2 — brother Jack is a Bishop in the Archdiocese of the Military in Washington, D.C.

As he approaches his 50th anniversary, Monsignor Glynn of Holy Family Church remains positive about the future. "I am," he says, "an eternal optimist."

Yet the Monsignor is quietly concerned — dismayed by the dwindling number of vocations and the growing need to replace the priests who are approaching retirement.

He and 27 of his seminary classmates will be celebrating their 50th anniversary this year. Vocations back then were almost commonplace. The Monsignor remembers that 4 boys from his street alone — Richmond Street in St. Gregory's Parish in Dorchester — were ordained in 1947.

Duxbury has produced no priests in the 16 years he has been here — save for Brian Dwyer of Torrey Lane who is now studying to be an Edmundite priest. "But truthfully, we had nothing to do with that. Brian was a graduate of St. Michael's College and he was taught by the Edmundites," Monsignor Glynn explains.

With a determination built upon an inbred optimism and unbroken faith, the Monsignor believes that answers to this puzzle will come in time. For now, he's just grateful he doesn't have to provide the answers. "Sometimes I just have to think about the issues the Cardinal (Bernard Law) has to deal with, and I thank God it isn't me. These," he says, "are troubling times."

Despair is not an emotion on which he dwells, yet he remains troubled by the tragedy of the mid-80s in which several teens were killed in a series of auto accidents. Alcohol was a factor in all. It was after the final accident, the last funeral, that Monsignor Glynn took his last drink. "I was at Buddy Hackett's the night of the accident that claimed the lives of 2 young kids. I said to myself, that's it. No more." The private promise was made 11 years ago.

Just as quickly he adds, "But these are not terrible times. We have our challenges and we'll get through them. We always do."

Talk to his assistant, Mary DiCenzo, and you will understand the depth of Monsignor Glynn's optimism — be it the future of his beloved church or his undying hope that he will one day witness a Red Sox world championship.

"When you talk about Monsignor Glynn, you are talking about a man's man," she explains with an exuberant affection. "He loves sports, and more than about anything else, he loves his Red Sox."

A close 2nd would have to his golf.

Monsignor Glynn candidly admits the dual addictions.

"It's true," he says. "I go to about 20 Red Sox games a year and I'd have to say you could find me on the golf course at least twice a week."

His vacations are centered around the 2 activities — whether it's watching spring training or taking in a few rounds of golf with 26 or so of his peers during a week in Florida.

Baseball has long been his passion and if you want to jumpstart a conversation with this reserved gentleman, just mention Fenway Park.

"Outrageous" is how he describes players' multi-million dollar salaries and he worries that such incredible figures will ultimately ruin a once simple game. Yet just as he remains optimistic about the church, Monsignor Glynn figures baseball will somehow survive its current absurdity.

He is, however, concerned about the lack of heroes for today's youth. The Monsignor quickly recalls the advice he was given in his youth. "Regard them on the field but remember they are human beings and they can disappoint you at times."

Golf is a passion he acquired soon after his ordination. He visits "the shrine," equipped with his 9 iron, about twice a week.

As the Monsignor reflects on his 50 years in the priesthood, he is struck by the years that have passed so quickly. "I guess I don't want to believe it because it means the end is in sight."

He will be 75 years old in December and plans to stay on at Holy Family "another year or so, if my health is good." A person needs hobbies, he says, to remain young and robust. Golf has been a wonderful hobby, he admits.

Fifty years. It seems like yesterday when his father, Michael bade him goodbye the night before he entered St. John's Seminary. "If you don't like it, you can always come home," the father told his son.

"It was as simple as that," the Monsignor recalls. "I knew I could come home. But I was so naive. I thought everything would be taken care of once I entered the seminary. But the priest who drove to me to the seminary gave me a bit of advice. He said, 'there are no angels here.' I needed to hear that."

The Monsignor acknowledges that Duxbury is likely the last stop on his priestly mission. "But not everyone," he acknowledges, "gets to Duxbury."

The parish of Holy Family is a home that has grown to more than 2,200 families and a place he has come to cherish.

While the Monsignor is credited with spearheading the enormous task of building the \$3.3 million church on the corner of Tremont and Chestnut Sts., he remains most humble about his achievements. He is almost hesitant to discuss the Cardinal Cushing Award he was honored with in 1993 in recognition of his long support of the St. James Society missions.

"This human journey that we all are on brought me here to Duxbury," he says. "I am most grateful for what has been."

The members of Holy Family, no doubt, are just as thankful.

(A Mass of Thanksgiving will be celebrated in honor of Monsignor Glynn's 50th anniversary on Sunday, April 27 at 2:30 pm in Holy Family Church.)